



ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900

Lisa D. Jones
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

Tel: 334-242-3184
Fax: 334-242-1083

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Andi Martin, Marketing and Public Relations Manager

andi.martin@ahc.alabama.gov, 334-230-2680

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Alabama Historical Commission Will Seek Final Order to Confirm Ownership of *Clotilda*

(Montgomery, AL) In July, the Alabama Historical Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, filed Admiralty Claim in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Alabama in Mobile as part of an ongoing and long-term protection and preservation plan for the *Clotilda*, the last-known slave ship in the United States. Pursuant to the claimant process, the official "Notice of Action in rem and Arrest of Vessel" was published for three consecutive weeks in the *Lagniappe*, beginning August 16, 2019. Potential plaintiffs were advised to file any claim with the court no later than 14 days after the final publication of the notice, which would have been Friday, September 13, 2019.

Since no claims were filed within the allotted timeframe, the AHC will file a motion to effectively default any potential claimants. Following this action, the AHC will prepare and file a motion seeking a final order from the Court to confirm the State of Alabama's ownership of the vessel so that the State can exercise all rights associated with ownership.

In June 2019, AHC contracted with **Burr and Foreman**, a Mobile-based law firm specializing in **maritime law**, for assistance in securing every available legal tool to aid in the protection and preservation of the *Clotilda*. The Attorney General of Alabama deputized Burr and Foreman partner **John Kavanagh** to act on behalf of the state historical commission.

According to Kavanagh, once such order is granted, it is likely that the case will move to the Federal Court's administrative docket while work at the site continues. "This will allow the Federal Court to retain jurisdiction in the event that assistance is needed for further orders and/or to adjudicate issues that might arise during work to preserve, protect and promote this historically significant maritime find," said Kavanagh.

"We are charged with ensuring this tremendously important archaeological artifact is preserved and protected for Africatown and our nation," said **Lisa D. Jones, Executive Director of the Alabama Historical Commission**. "It carries a story and an obligation to meet every opportunity to plan for its safeguarding. The careful considerations for the protection, preservation, and interpretation of the *Clotilda* have been entirely methodical and strategic. This Admiralty Claim has been important groundwork for ongoing efforts to not only ensure the *Clotilda's* immediate assessment, but to also establish pathways for its longevity."

AHC is charged with protecting, preserving and interpreting Alabama's historic places. This charge also includes abandoned shipwrecks, or the remains of those ships, and all underwater archeological artifacts embedded in or on lands belonging to the State of Alabama. This mandate is set forth in the **Abandoned Shipwrecks Act** and the **Alabama Underwater Cultural Resources Act**.



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To learn more about the Alabama Historical Commission, please visit www.ahc.alabama.gov.

About the Alabama Historical Commission

Located in historic downtown Montgomery at 468 S. Perry Street, the Alabama Historical Commission is the state historic preservation agency for Alabama. The agency was created by an act of the state legislature in 1966 with a mission to protect, preserve and interpret Alabama's historic places. AHC works to accomplish its mission through two fields of endeavor: Preservation and promotion of state-owned historic sites as public attractions; and, statewide programs to assist people, groups, towns, and cities with local preservation activities. For a complete list of programs and properties owned and operated by the AHC, hours of operation, and admission fees please visit ahc.alabama.gov.

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